

# Commission on Streamlining Government

Senator Jack Donahue, *Chairman*  
Roy O. Martin, *Vice Chair*  
Angele Davis, Commissioner of  
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Barry Erwin  
Brett F. Geymann, Representative  
Leonard Hardman  
John Kennedy, State Treasurer  
Lansing Kolb  
Mike Michot, Senator  
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Trudy Fourmy, *Secretary*

## MINUTES FROM THE 2009 LISTENING TOUR

October 1, 2009 - Jefferson Parish Council Chambers  
1221 Elmwood Park Blvd. - Yenni Building  
Harahan, LA

**DATE APPROVED: October 27, 2009**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Jack Donahue  
Roy Martin  
Leonard Hardman  
Treasurer John Kennedy

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Tim Prather, Commission Coordinator  
Trudy Fourmy, Commission Secretary

### **INVITED LEGISLATORS/GUESTS**

Senator Conrad Appel  
Representative Joseph Lopinto  
Evans Spiceland  
Representative Buillot

### **WITNESSES PRESENT**

Valerie Hiser, Citizens w/Developmental Disabilities  
Melody Teague McDonald  
Carmen O'Mara, Families with Disabilities  
Janet Hays, Reopen Charity Hospital  
Howard Rodgers, New Orleans Council on Aging  
George Stack, Lafourche Arc & Louisiana Alliance  
Al Robichaux, Jefferson Council on Aging  
Donald Banning, National Federation for the Blind  
Derrick Morrison, Reopen Charity Hospital  
Joyce Feast, LA Alliance of DSPS  
Commissioner Eric Skrmetta, PSC

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Commissioner Angele Davis  
Barry Erwin  
Representative Brett Geymann  
Lansing Kolb  
Senator Mike Michot  
Representative Jim Morris

Rebecca Punzo  
Eileen Comiskey  
Ron Besson  
Cody Marshall  
Kyle Soignet, Lafourche Arc  
Martha Owen, Reopen Charity Hospital  
Robert Sullivan, Reopen Charity Hospital  
Kerry & Rebecca Punzo  
Martha Owen  
Jack Irion  
Merritt McDonald

**WITNESSES PRESENT (continued)**

Charlene Rodriguez, Lafourche Council on Aging  
Diana Edmonson, Terrebonne Council on Aging  
Bruce Blaney, Supported Living Network  
Robert Becker, New Orleans City Park

Brad Ott  
George Andrews  
K. C. King

**I. CALL TO ORDER / COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS**

Senator Donahue opened the meeting by explaining that the state of Louisiana faces a severe decline in revenues through fiscal year 2012 which, if no corrective action is taken, will leave a significant funding gap in state government expenditures and will create serious sustainability issues in financing state obligations. He said that it is essential that the state act now to reduce the cost of state government, through all means available, including efficiencies, economies, greater effectiveness, and other means to streamline government in order to overcome the projected severe revenue reductions occurring through 2012 and to ensure that available state tax dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively. Senator Donahue added that many state agencies were created over thirty years ago and a review of all agencies and their activities, functions, programs, and services is needed to determine whether the purpose served by the agency or activity, function, program, or service, continues to be relevant. He then introduced the panel and requested that when giving testimony, due to the number of individuals wanting to testify, to limit testimony to 3-5 minutes.

**II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

Valerie Hiser with Citizens with Developmental Disabilities asked the commission to fully support the recommendations in a report by DHH to the Streamline Commission which included establishing the framework for the full continuum of care for individuals with developmental disabilities. Ms. Hiser also asked the commission to continue efforts that started several years ago to consolidate state operated residential and vocational services for individuals with developmental disabilities. She was speaking on behalf of her daughter with developmental disabilities

Mr. Martin told Ms. Hiser that her recommendation was one already being seriously considered and his advisory group is taking it up with Mr. Levine. Senator Donahue told Ms. Hiser that on October 12, 2009, he has a meeting scheduled with Kathy Kleibert and they would be discussing these topics. Senator Donahue then discussed the 2500 new waiver slots.

Melody Teague introduced herself as a state employee who was not a politician or a public speaker. She had some concerns about outsourcing jobs with the thought that it would save money. She explained that she works with contracts on a regular basis and sees contracts coming in for consultants who are paid well more than a state employee would be paid and also contracts issued where the contractor will take a hit and low ball a contract, have it locked in for three years, then at the end of that time when the program is dismantled, people are gone, and you are at their mercy, so they come back in with a higher figure for the next time. She stated that she had heard some people say that eliminating state jobs would be good for Louisiana because jobs would be coming to Louisiana. She stated that whenever the services were put out to bid, a majority of the companies from the bid list are from other states, who will

come here, take our money, and take it back to their state to spend it, so she wondered how this would help our economy. Ms. Teague further stated that state agencies have shown that they can do specific services cheaper and better than private industries and yet they are told that their services would have to be bid on and in her opinion that was unfair. She went on to say that she felt like streamlining government was the good ole boy network made popular by many Louisiana politicians and she then asked if they were being manipulated to help someone fill campaign promises and then began reading from Governor Jindal's campaign promises letter. Ms. Teague wondered why the governor's promises fell to the wayside. She stated that there were state employees who work for the people and if they were wanting to streamline government, they should take a look at the top, as there were supervisors, several she knew personally, who are on state payroll and supervise one employee. The total scope of their duties is checking grammar on letters that go out and that is a travesty and waste of public funds and they are charged to serve citizens and the majority of state employees are for the people. She added that they strived to save money in any way that they can. She cautioned her contractors to cut back on their travel, that now was not the time. She suggested that something be done in-house if training was needed. The rank and file staff of the state could probably run government if the leaders were not available.

Mr. Martin told Ms. Teague that the governor had said he wanted to protect all Louisiana workers, including government and non-government and that it sounded like the governor was protecting her job because she was doing a great job and that her comments about the number of supervisors and how many they are supervising is definitely an area his advisory group is looking at. His advisory committee was looking at all areas of government, especially the supervisory role of government to see if it is intact. He said on the concept of privatization and outsourcing, the committee is only charged to make recommendations and that it would only make sense to out source something where the private sector could do it cheaper and more efficiently with the same or better quality. He added that at the same time there are cases where in-sourcing can be done more efficiently and cheaper and that is why the committee looks at both sides of the spectrum to make government work for all of us, state employees and non-state employees as there is a huge problem that is not going away. He added that he thought she was a dedicated state employee and had nothing to fear. She answered that she appreciated him taking the time to consider all of these things but that he had to understand that he was new to this and that they have been there for years and through those years staff had been cut on a regular basis. The duties do not go away, they are absorbed and their job specs now run up to 3 pages on what they have to do. They are now doing more with less than ever before and she was not sure how much more could be cut until the state would begin to bleed.

Treasurer Kennedy thanked her for coming and stated that he did not know if this was a good thing or a bad thing, and reminded her that he was not new to this. He added that in 1995, a group of business leaders joined together to create a Committee for a Secure Louisiana. There was a national accounting firm hired to take an exhaustive look at state government. The state adopted many of their recommendations. The report had something to say about the workforce which included many of the things she had talked about. The report had said that the problem was that we were too top heavy and that the changes did not impact those at the top but it impacted those delivering the services. Ms. Teague then asked Mr. Kennedy why they kept giving themselves raises. Mr. Kennedy asked if she would let him finish and stated that he had not given himself a raise. He went on to say that the report suggested that we downsize government, not by laying anyone off, but rather through attrition. He realized there

was a large turnover in state government. He went on to say that it was not all they said about state government, that they also said that vacancies should not be filled, eliminate layers of management, look at spans of control and make sure they were not managing less than 10 employees, consolidate regional offices and smaller units of government into larger units of government. The report stated that after this was done, their projections were that several hundred million dollars could be saved. Then with the savings that would be seen because of this, 20% of that should be placed in a pool to give pay raises to remaining employees who are taking on additional responsibilities. He stated there would be a smaller number of employees with no one being fired. If we strategically organize then the employees in the trenches that are taking on additional responsibility would receive higher pay. He stated that we did not do that. He proposed it again later and he thought that if we did this, we could do it strategically and that state government would be better off and the state employees who deliver the services will be better off. His final thought was that if Ms. Teague had specific instances where the state is paying outside vendors more money to deliver a product for service that can be delivered cheaper in-house, he asked her to e-mail him or call. He acknowledged that she may be reluctant to do it in writing and gave her his phone number, (225) 342-0012, in case she preferred to do it by phone. He asked her to please call him and tell him. Ms. Teague responded, "No, I will get into trouble if I do that!" Mr. Kennedy answered that no one would know if she called him and that he would not use her name. He added that if someone tries to give her trouble, he asked her to call him a second time.

Senator Donahue also mentioned that there was yet another report that came out called "Cut the Fat Report" in 2001 and the recommendation of that report was to change the way Louisiana does business in relation to classified employees. The problem is that we have so much attrition in this category and the state has to hire people as those others leave and then have to retrain the new ones. We could save money if we could lose the attrition. He assured Ms. Teague that the commission was not looking at just throwing state employees out, and that she would see that when recommendations were made.

Mr. Hardman stated that he was a twenty-seven year civil service employee that he believed a feasibility study should be required for outsourcing and privatization. He said the only reason outside contractors are interested in work in Louisiana is for profit, but that for civil service employees it is because they take pride in what they do. He reminded the commission that there were too many chiefs and not enough indians.

Ms. Teague requested to leave copies of Governor Jindal's promise to Louisiana. Mr. Kennedy encouraged Ms. Teague that he meant what he said about calling him and that she had his word that she would not get in trouble; that if she knew of an instance where we could save money by doing it within government as opposed to doing it out, to please call him. He added that he would not use her name and again promised her that she would not get in trouble. He stated that he would give her his home number. Ms. Teague ended her testimony by stating that she hoped they could all work together. Mr. Martin added that he found her comments on consultants very interesting, in that some of the local consultants that have been hired do not have to go through public bid laws and are hired on a whim and that he was very interested in those applications.

Al Robichaux thanked the commission for coming to Jefferson Parish. He is the executive director of the Jefferson Council of Aging and was present because the Department of Health & Hospitals had

recommended the consolidation of the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs into the Department of Health & Hospitals. He stated that his council was 100% opposed to the absorption of Elderly Affairs into DHH. He further stated that the Councils on Aging were created by legislation and had voluntary boards, were not employees of the state and not employees of the parishes. They operate on a non-profit basis. Their reasons for opposition were that it had been stated that similar functions are performed at the Office of Aging and Adult Services and that this statement is not correct. He discussed the law that regards their functions. He stressed that if there was duplication, it was other offices and not the Office of Elderly Affairs. He was of the opinion that the office could not be streamlined and modernized by taking voluntary council offices on aging and putting them in DHH, the largest department in the state. They are operating to help people stay independent which saves the state money by the patient not being put into a nursing home until necessary. He stated that DHH was all about Medicaid. He discussed qualifications for this program and how his office served the needs of individuals and not their financial status. He then gave statistics on the percentage of elderly in the state. He also gave information regarding their fund raising events. He stated that it was not their intention to be critical of DHH but they believed their department best served the elderly through the present organization or if by moving the department of aging and adult services under the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs. Another suggestion would be to create a new Department of Aging. He stressed that the commission not recommend consolidating the two departments as it would not save any money.

Mr. Martin stated that directly after Secretary Levine had made that particular recommendation, a mass amount of e-mails was received on all the Councils on Aging. The Governor's office is reviewing the recommendation very closely and he was somewhat sure that it would not come out as a recommendation from the advisory group. Mr. Robichaux stated that there were nine Aging & Disability Resources Center that could take care of the waivers. Mr. Kennedy said that DHH had made some good recommendations, but that this was not one of them. His research has shown that the work done by the Council on Aging is a lot different than the core mission of DHH and he did not think that the recommendation would pass. Mr. Robichaux reminded the commission that this battle had to be fought every year with very limited staff and resources and it was their wish that this issue would be put to rest once and for all.

Charlene Rodriguez, Executive Director for Lafourche Council on Aging, was next to testify. She asked each member to allow the Office of Elderly Affairs a chance to present a plan on streamlining before they acted. She assured them that their office was the closest link to the elderly in each parish for services needed and that they worked on an individual basis to identify and evaluate the needs to provide appropriate services which will sustain them in their own homes for longer periods. She then went into detail regarding all the help given to the elderly to make sure they were provided all the services that they qualified for. She asked each member to make an informed decision on their recommendation.

Next was Howard Rodgers, Executive Director of New Orleans Council on Aging, who echoed the same sentiments of the previous two individuals giving testimony. He read a letter from the Council on Aging that had been sent to the New Orleans delegation and the mayor and city council concerning the streamlining commission and the recommendation to voice their statewide opposition of the consolidation. He discussed the aging waiver and stated that there was over 15,000 individuals on the adult waiver program waiting list and that some had died and was still on the waiting list. He added that

it would take 3 years for the 15,000 on that list and that more people would be added to the list during that 3 years. They have a plan that has been submitted to the Streamlining Commission and he asked them to refer to a resolution that would allow the constituency to remain under the Office of the Governor or to replace it with a new office on aging.

Eric Skrmetta, Public Service Commissioner, District 1, testified that he was constantly working to find ways to reduce the cost for all consumers on utility services. He stated that Maurice McTigue gave testimony to the Streamlining Commission indicating that if a state agency was self funded, that it was a prime candidate to be separated from the appropriations issues of the legislature and thereby should be removed from the budget in matters of administration. He stressed that the Public Service Commission was a prime example of this. He stated it was an independent agency and that from a constitutional standpoint, it would appear that they were a prime candidate to be removed from budgetary consideration so as to allow them to function under its own constitutional mandate. It was his further opinion that if this recommendation was accepted that the Public Service Commission would be able to function at a greater level of efficiency by allowing them to modify the budgetary requirements and expenditures as needed without interference of another layer of bureaucracy. He gave examples of this. As commissioner, he stated that it was his obligation to reduce the cost of government to the benefit of the citizens and that he would continue to do so and asked the committee to entertain his suggestion and allow the PSC to not only immediately reduce the state budget by \$8.9 million but also recognize how such action would allow the agency to modify its management method to allow for greater savings to be realized by the consumers of the state.

Senator Donahue stated that one of the things he wants to be careful of is another commission that will establish the regulation of fees. He discussed the difference between taxes and fees. He discussed that the commission would regulate how fees were assessed. Future discussions would revolve around what the citizens should pay for and what they should not pay for. Mr. Skrmetta stated that his concerns were that by not being able to freely manipulate how the office is managed, it would put them into the awkward position of not having the best counsel and they are constantly having to allow for outside counsel and that they would like to reduce the amount spent on outside counsel and take part of it to hire attorneys with more experience and keep them.

Ron Beeson testified on behalf of Rep. Connick who could not be present. He wanted to briefly discuss the Crescent City Connection Division. He stated that the plans, according to Secretary Ankner, were to extend the bridge tolls pass 2012. Rep. Connick objects to the extension because they were placed there to pay for the bridge and should be paid off in 2012 and that the Division has not been up-front with what has been done in the past. He discussed the promised infrastructure improvement on the Westbank that was not done. There had been testimony given last year at a House committee that the provision of the infrastructure improvement was only included so that the taxpayers would vote for it. He stated that the tolls raise \$22 million per year and it was his understanding that they were spending \$27 million. He then discussed the LA 1 project. He stated that Rep. Connick was asking to look at not renewing or extending the tolls.

Mr. Kennedy stated that he knew Rep. Connick has worked very hard on this issue and that research was being done and that during the last five years, \$145 million had been collected in tolls and that the

Division had spent \$170 million. This has caused the taxpayers to pay tolls, plus some. The study showed that 240 people had joined the retirement system and that the Division had paid \$12 million per year on an insurance policy for \$100 million and found that there was a \$50 million deductible. When Rep. Connick brought this to the attention of DOTD, this insurance policy was terminated. This insurance policy had been paid at the rate of \$12 million per year for 18 years. He thought that the tolls should be terminated in 2012 and that if the taxpayers decided that they wanted to tax themselves, it would be their call.

Martha Owen testified that as the calculation of the cost for a proposed \$1.2 billion complex, she urged the commission to consider several elements to reflect a true assessment of the expenditures.

Senator Donahue suggested that he had several cards regarding the issue and that the group select a spokesman so that it will not be duplicative talking. An unknown speaker in the audience stated that he thought everyone should have the opportunity to speak.

Ms. Owen continued by stating that the Foundation for Historical Louisiana has spent \$600,000 in volunteer contributions to provide a plan for Big Charity. The RMJM study offers a study to the proposed hospital with a cost of \$500 million. She asked that the commission use their influence to demand public hearings on that particular project. She stressed that the following should be included in their calculations: loss of the medical district, the financial and business core, and the billions in revenue since the closure for the last four years. Also, they should consider the efforts of those preparing the hospital for reopening. She discussed the trashing of the equipment and the damage to the hospital. She asked how to measure the disrespect shown the people of the city who have been denied their rights to a proper public hearing procedure. She ask that the commission understand that her outline was the unreported, unspeakable, outrageous, unrefutable costs paid in full by the people of the city. She gave a history of her heritage to New Orleans. Mr. Kennedy stated that he did not think that this proposal had been given a full hearing. He then discussed the RMJM report and that the current administration had hired an outside consultant to review the report and that it gave the appearance of being biased because of the outside consultant having ties to LSU. He wanted to contract with a truly independent expert in the field to give us advice before moving forward. His research shows that rehab would cost about \$550 million compared to \$1.2 billion to construct a new hospital. He said if they could do it on the \$550 million, then his suggestion would be to take the \$100 million in savings and give it to the chancellor of LSU Medical Center and ask him to use it to recruit the top researchers. He asked her what she meant when she referred to the cost of trashing the hospital. She replied that she had seen a video of the hospital after it was cleaned by the U.S. Military, the National Guard from Oklahoma, along with doctors, nurses and some of the health care staffers. The first three floors were absolutely pristine and certified for reopening. As she understood it, a call came to close the hospital and she could not pinpoint those responsible for that particular action, but that she went into the hospital when there was a health care summit and everyone was acting as though they were in the middle of a disaster scene in the emergency area of the hospital. There were materials, beds, equipment pushed against the walls. This was an area that had been photographed earlier as ready to be used. There was trash and boxes piled up all over. She was very surprised as the electrical system was working when videoed and had all the light fixtures. When she went into the hospital, there were pigtails and she wondered how Katrina could do electrical pigtails. She expressed that she knew the difference between a natural disaster and a manmade

disaster and that it was clearly a manmade disaster. Mr. Kennedy had asked for a tour of the hospital as he had heard the stories but was told it was unsafe. He went and toured the facility and found that the electricity was on, the basement had been pumped out and things were a little dusty. Other than that, it was in good and operable condition. There were lights and air conditioning also. He never really understood what had happened after that. Ms. Owen stated that they had video that she could send to the committee.

Senator Donahue said that he has done extensive research on the hospital and that there were things that really concerned him, one being the state building a \$1.2 billion hospital with no way to pay it back but rather than getting into a debate about whether the state keeps and rebuilds Charity Hospital or builds a new one, he is looking for concrete information about whatever money is available and where it is going to come from and how much it is going to cost the state. She reminded Senator Donahue that the commission issued a report on September 9, 2009 that was carried in the Alexandria newspaper and in Baton Rouge regarding the preliminary feelings relating to the \$1.2 billion hospital. When there is lack of information in a discussion, the citizens have no news report of that particular event. It was not carried in the local newspapers, not on the radio or in any of the television coverage. She stressed that the commission could help by reviewing the materials and information and then coming to a decision. He reminded her that there were advisory groups that meet independently and that it could have possibly been one of those groups that released that information. She stated that he (Senator Donahue) was quoted in the article and that she would get him a copy of it.

Merritt McDonald presented a list of items he would like the commission to consider:

- 1) Reduce the number of parishes in the state.
- 2) Stop duplication in our A & M universities
- 3) Performance audits on all higher educational programs
- 4) See who pays for foreign students at our colleges
- 5) Train more general practitioners
- 6) Define the missions of each of the higher educational institutional programs
- 7) Clarify economic development programs
- 8) Design buildings with ease of maintenance
- 9) Reduce the number of airports in the state
- 10) Put all ports under one control
- 11) Hold elected officials responsible for their duties
- 12) Use Louisiana foods in school lunch programs
- 13) Remove football from education
- 14) Develop curriculums for college bound students and non-college bound students
- 15) Mass transit master plan for the state
- 16) Save Charity Hospital
- 17) Clarify regulations for oil industries
- 18) Return ROTC to college campuses
- 19) Year round public schools



Senator Donahue thanked him for the many suggestions and stated that a lot of the things he had mentioned were already underway. Mr. Martin stated that the commission had a website for recommendations to be made.

George Stack, executive director with the Lafourche Arc & Alliance of Independent Providers presented a paper to the commission called Practical Solutions. Mr. Stack explained that the paper focuses on healthcare as it relates to developmental disabilities, with ideas to help budget woes, etc. Some of the highlights of Practical Solutions explained that state developmental center costs, on average, at least \$100,000.00 per person per year, more than a private provider for the identical service. He said that it was time that DHH assign some of the cuts to themselves and not always on the private providers.

Senator Donahue told Mr. Stack that he was right on target with his comments and that one of the things the commission would be doing is to try to establish priorities in the state so we can quit killing healthcare and higher education.

Treasurer Kennedy discussed Mr. Levine testifying before the Senate Finance Committee last week and stated that we were going to have a 600 million dollar deficit in medicaid this year and how it surprised a number of them because they thought they had things solved for this year and that it was the next fiscal year they had been focusing on. He said Mr. Levine attributed this, in part, to additional expenses from treating people for swine flu. Treasurer Kennedy said that about eighteen months ago a decision was made by a previous administration to purchase a new accounting system for the state of Louisiana at a cost of 150 million dollars and that he has asked Governor Jindal about putting that project on hold. Treasurer Kennedy said that he was not saying that accounting systems are not important but that if the choice is between a new accounting system or treating children for the swine flu, the choice is obviously the children. He added that the state is working on that issue and that he knows the providers have caught the brunt of this but they are trying to address it in a rational way. Mr. Stack recommended some time lines so that this will not go on forever and cause hundreds of millions of dollars to be lost.

Donald Banning, with the National Federation for the Blind, discussed their opposition to the merging of departments (Social Services with Health & Hospitals) and explained how it affects citizens of Louisiana. He also talked about rehabilitative services being used for training and education that is necessary for blind people.

Robert Becker, with New Orleans City Park, began with stating that they have reduced their workforce by one-third. He said that the tax on video poker at the fairgrounds provides twenty percent of their operating budget and they raise the other eighty percent themselves and yet they had their general fund appropriation slashed sixty percent. Mr. Becker asked that the commission please keep in mind that New Orleans City Park is a state agency, when looking carefully at the dedicated funds. He closed with asking the commission to work with the civil service commission to free up job classifications and duties to increase the number of unclassified workers and also requested help to agencies with raising endowment funds for their operation which will take more pressure off the general fund.

George Andrews explained that he worked as a private consultant with the state and also as an unclassified employee with the state and for the last fifteen years as a classified employee of the state

Mr. Andrews expressed his concerns for public health clinics, his high opinions of state employees, and his personal observation of those employees. He wanted to say that most employees are dedicated and loyal leaders in the community. He noticed that there is a lack of direction from the Civil Service Commission since Katrina, especially in the advertisement of positions. He now works as a licensed marriage and family therapist.

Brad Ott discussed the fears people had of their personal property being taken and with the real possibility of it being totally lost and compromised. Mr. Ott also talked about land values and the true intent of the building moratorium. He also pointed out that the state office building in Duncan Plaza was torn down along with the new supreme court, leaving a vacant piece of land that could be utilized instead of spending the seventy-three million dollars that had been allocated for land acquisition in lower mid-city. Mr. Ott urged the commission to affirm the recommendation of the Efficiency and Benchmarking Committee to revitalize the original Charity complex without destruction and displacement.

Bruce Blaney, representing the Supported Living Network, said they were seeing a relentless attack on in-home support, individual support, for both the elderly and people with developmental disabilities. Mr. Blaney told the commission they had been misinformed by Mr. Levine about the waiver program being out of control and that the program is in danger. The major falsehood is that it should be cut because it is the fastest growing program. The reason for the growth is that these people do not want to go to institutions or nursing homes. He also said that nursing homes have big vacancy rates yet they had been given twenty million dollars for those empty beds and an additional \$102 million rate increase but yet in-home support took an 8% cut. The other major point he wanted to make was that the assault on individual support states that it is only necessary to evaluate and assess the waiver on in-home support, that it is not necessary to look at nursing homes, group homes or day programs. His organization is upset that the only human service representation on the commission is Lansing Kolb, which does not give them a lot of confidence in the mission regarding support for older people and those with disabilities living in their own homes.

J. C. King came forward to give testimony regarding the lack of discussion on outsourcing and the ICF and Road Home. He asked if the state had not learned their lesson from these programs and how not to do it. He suggested very strongly for attention be paid to the institution efforts. He asked that they not think about changing anything until they have looked very closely to see if the culture will sustain the kind of outsourcing, as ICF was a nightmare and just wanted to issue a word of caution.

Rebecca Punzo gave testimony on behalf of herself and her husband, stating that they are retired teachers from the New Orleans public schools. She wanted to caution against hasty moves because of the unintended consequences. As a result of the state takeover following Katrina, their jobs were gone and the cost of health coverage skyrocketed. She added that more schools were being taken over and that it would make the matter even worse and would throw those people into a situation of not having insurance. Mr. Punzo testified that one of the problems in the state seems to be taking resources away from public schools and trying to create individual charter schools. He was of the opinion that the public school system was still working. One major consequence for students is that most of the charter schools can cherry pick their students and those with disabilities or problems are thrown to the wayside and into the public school system.

Joyce Feast with the Alliance of DSPS testified that they represented 30,000 front line workers and that they were the lowest paid in the state. They run the disabled 's personal errands and try to show compassion to them as they want to continue to live in the community and to retain their rights. In group homes, they have no say or no choice. In 2007, they received a \$2.00 raise but the cuts have taken that away. She stressed that when they considered cuts, to consider that she could not call the utility company to ask them to keep her lights on because her pay had been cut again but that they would expect her to pay the bill anyway.

Carmen Mara, Families with Disabilities, wanted to ask the commission to look at the closure of the state group home in Columbia that is less occupied and urged them to look into the development of the New Orleans Developmental Center that has been vacated since Katrina. The maintenance for the grounds is \$1.7 million and there is no one there. She discussed the long wait for the waiver. She was in support of the families having the opportunity to a waiver and asked them to consider the families that are waiting for services. Living in a center cost \$171,000 and the budget for planned home care is \$55,000.

Eileen Comiskey rose to speak on the Big Charity but only wanted to say a few quick thoughts regarding the transition from group homes and other places. She was in hopes of impressing on the commission the panic mode they are in. She added that if the Charity did reopen, they were confident that LSU, Tulane and all the academic research professionals will be there immediately. She thought that the most contestable thing was that there had been no public hearings on the closure of Big Charity.

Cody Marshall was next to testify regarding Charity and was in support of it being reopened. He stated that it was a fabric to the city and that tearing it down would be detrimental to the historic value and asked again for the Charity to be reopened.

Jack Irion did not wish to testify.

Diana Edmonson, director of the Terrebonne Council on Aging, spoke on behalf of in-home support for the elderly and developmentally delayed. She gave her own personal experience. She stated that she would continue to send everyone e-mails. She asked that they just say "yes" and to let it be and they could go back to their lives. Senator Donahue stressed to her that there was no battle and that they had surrendered.

Janet Hays, with the committee to reopen Charity Hospital, asked the commission how they could get an open public meeting at the state level in order to weigh the plans side by side. Treasurer Kennedy said he hoped it would come before the Streamline Commission. He said what concerns him with the entire process is that those in control have refused to let other ideas be considered and that all the ideas deserve to be considered.

Senator Donahue said the last needs assessment that was done for Charity Hospital was in 2004, and that certainly the needs had changed since then. He said that he would like to see, whether it is six hundred million dollars or 1.2 billion dollars, how is that going to fit into reducing the budget and how is the state going to pay for it.

Treasurer Kennedy said the only critique we have is by an entity that by appearances is not completely unbiased. He proposed getting a truly independent expert to evaluate whether Charity can be rehabilitated and that if they say it cannot be rehabilitated, then take the issue off the table, but until that happens he does not think that it should be taken off the table because he doesn't believe it has been given a fair hearing.

Derrick Morrison, with the committee to reopen Charity Hospital, told the commission that the selection of the speakers had been arbitrary and that there was no rule of law. He came at 4:30 p.m. and put a card in and that should have allowed him to be the first speaker. As it stands, he is one of the last speakers. When Senator Donahue tried to apologize to him, he interrupted to say that whoever was running the meeting needed lessons. His only point he wanted to make was that the legislature should invite RMJM-Hilliard to lay out what the plan is. Mr. Morrison said that a 248 page report on the study of RMJM-Hilliard can be found on-line at fhl.org. He claimed that LSU Office of Facility Development is spreading a lot of misinformation and said that RMJM-Hilliard is building the cancer center for LSU.

Robert Sullivan, with the committee to reopen Charity Hospital, stated that the only reason he was present was to present the commission three maps with details explaining each map. The first map shows the area around Charity Hospital which consists of existing medical buildings, vacant lots, and several other structures. He stated that many of these properties already belong to the state. The second map shows the area where LSU is looking for a site for new construction of a medical center. It shows the individual properties which are currently businesses and residences. The third map, which was originally published in the Times-Picayune, shows what LSU is currently planning to construct in place of these existing businesses and residences. These maps show that LSU is spending a lot of money that does not need to be spent.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

Senator Donahue thanked those in attendance for their time and comments.

There being no further business, Senator Donahue made a motion to adjourn. There being no objection, the meeting was adjourned.

October 27, 2009

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**DATE APPROVED**

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**Chairman Jack Donahue**